

Comments from the
Humboldt County Resource Lands Working Group (HCRLWG)
To the Humboldt County Board of Directors
regarding
Section 10.7 Scenic Resources

The structure for this document is as follows:

Title of the Goal, Standard, Policy, or Implementation Measure

HCRLWG RECOMMENDATION: Recommended language for that section from the Humboldt County Resource Lands Working Group in blue.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Rationale for the changes and other comments in blue.

Any portions in green are related to changes made at the planning commission and were indicated that way in the version sent to the Board of Supervisors.

September 19, 2014

SR-G1. Scenic Resource Protection.

SR-G1. Scenic Resource Protection. Protected high-value forest, agriculture, river, and coastal scenic areas that contribute to the enjoyment of Humboldt County's beauty and abundant natural resources.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Aren't these things already addressed in other elements? Existing protections (for example, Coastal Zone and along Scenic Corridors) should be retained. We would like to see how this is intended to be applied. How is high-value defined?

How does this affect existing forest and agriculture programs? For example, what effect will this have on Williamson contracts?

SR-G2. Community Separators.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-G2. Community Separators. Visible and aesthetic open space areas between urban development areas that separate and preserve unique identities of the county's cities and communities.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: What is the difference between Community Separators here and Greenbelt Overlay Zones in 10.2 Open Space? This can be accomplished through land use and zoning. Given the current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create either of these.

SR-Gx. Scenic Routes.Roadways.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-Gx. Scenic Routes.Roadways. Establish a system of scenic routes.roadways that will increase the enjoyment of, and opportunities for, recreational and cultural pursuits and tourism in the County.

HCRLWG COMMENTS:

We disagree with this goal based on the potential impacts to working resource lands and the subjective nature of their designation

SR-P1. Development in Identified Mapped Scenic Areas Viewsheds.

SR-P1. Development in Identified Mapped Scenic Areas Viewsheds. In mapped identified scenic areas, new discretionary and ministerial development shall be consistent with and subordinate to natural contours, including slopes, visible hilltops, and tree lines, and bluffs and rock outcroppings. Visible disturbance and interruption of natural features shall be minimized to the extent feasible.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: It is difficult to assess the effects of this policy without the maps. How does this mesh with the renewable energy policies (for examples wind mills)?

SR-P2. Development in Mapped Heritage Landscapes.

SR-P2. Development in Mapped Heritage Landscapes. Protect the scenic quality of mapped heritage landscape areas with appropriate land use designations and design review standards to ensure that new development preserves or enhances the heritage landscape values of the site.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: It is difficult to assess the effects of this policy without the maps. How are heritage landscapes defined?

SR-P3. Scenic Roadway Protection.

SR-P3. Scenic Roadway Protection. Protect the scenic quality of designated scenic roadways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, coastal views, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Who will designate these? What are the criteria? It is difficult to assess the effects of this policy without the maps.

SR-P4. Community Separators

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-P4. Community Separators. Protect the scenic quality of "community separators" from degradation by maintaining adequate open space between communities and cities.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Given the effectiveness of current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create these.

SP-P5. Development within Community Separators.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SP-P5 Development within Community Separators. Retain a rural character and promote low intensities of development in community separators. ~~Prohibit~~ Avoid annexation or inclusion in spheres of influence for sewer and water services. Provide opportunities for additional development in urban development areas in exchange for permanent open space preservation within community separators.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Given the effectiveness of current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create these.

SR-S1. Development in Mapped Scenic Areas

SR-S1. Development in Mapped Scenic Areas. Discretionary and ministerial development shall avoid visual disturbance of natural contours, hilltops, tree lines, forest landscapes, bluffs and rock outcroppings, to the maximum extent feasible. Roads and public utility corridors shall be narrow as possible and follow natural contours. Natural features disturbed for construction purposes shall be restored to as close to natural condition as feasible. ~~The construction of new off-premise billboards is prohibited.~~

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The impact of the standard cannot be assessed without the map. In general we do not agree with additional regulation of ministerial development.

SR-S2. Development in Mapped Heritage Landscapes

SR-S2. Development in Mapped Heritage Landscapes. Protect the scenic and historical qualities of mapped heritage landscapes as a resource of public importance. Discretionary and ministerial development shall be sited and designed to protect views, minimize the alteration of natural land forms, be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and preserve significant historical features. Discretionary development should restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

~~**SR-S2. Scenic and Visual Quality Protection.** Consider and protect the scenic and visual qualities of scenic areas as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along scenic areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.~~

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The impact of the Standard cannot be assessed without the map.

SR-S3. Scenic Roadway Plan Standards.

SR-S3. Scenic Roadway Plan Standards. The following standards apply to mapped scenic roadways: Plan for scenic roadway protection includes the following standards:

A. Visual Buffer Width. The width of the visual buffer along the road shall not exceed 200 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway.

B. Permitted Uses. Permitted uses shall be allowed except the construction of new off-premise billboards is prohibited. Permitted uses that within the visual buffer area measures may be required to protect scenic qualities of the site.

C. Site Development. Buildings and landscaping within the visual buffer shall be designed and located on the site to create a harmonious visual relationship with surrounding development and the natural terrain and vegetation.

- 1) Existing topography, vegetation, and scenic features of the site shall be retained to the maximum extent possible and incorporated into the proposed development.
- 2) Structures and signs shall be limited in height, bulk, and siting to be visually compatible with, and subordinate to, the character of surrounding areas.

D. Consideration of Views. Structures, signs, and plant materials within the visual buffer shall be constructed, installed, and planted to complement, enhance, and retain scenic views. Vegetative screening shall be used where needed to prevent significant intrusion or degradation of public views.

E. Location and Screening of Unsightly Features. Potentially unsightly features within the visual buffer area, such as parking lots etc., shall be located in areas not visible from the scenic highway **where feasible**. Where it is not possible to locate such features out of view, features shall be screened from view by planting and/or fences, walls, or berms. Screening shall utilize primarily natural materials rather than solid fencing, preferably vegetation, in conjunction with low-earth berms.

F. Site Grading. Grading or earth-moving operations within the visual buffer area shall be planned and executed in such a manner that final contours appear to be consistent with the existing terrain both on, and adjacent to, the site.

- 1) Vegetative cover shall be provided within a reasonable time after grading is completed to prevent visible scars remaining on the land from such operations.
- 2) Contours altered by grading shall be restored by means of land sculpturing and a cover of topsoil in such a manner as to minimize runoff and erosion and prevent ponding of water.
- 3) Finished contours shall be planted with native vegetation, so as to require minimum care and to be visually compatible with the existing ~~ground cover~~ landscaping.

G. Access Roads. The location and design of access roads within the visual buffer area shall not detract from the scenic quality of the road.

H. Utilities. New, relocated, or existing utility distribution lines within the visual buffer area shall be placed underground whenever feasible. When it is not feasible to place lines underground, they shall be located so as to be inconspicuous from the scenic route wherever feasible. Combined or adjacent rights-of-way and common poles shall be used wherever feasible.

Railroads and Public Facilities. Visual buffers shall exclude railroad rights-of-way and public facilities.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The impact of the Standard cannot be assessed without the map. What are the criteria for "harmonious visual relationships"? Section F here would be covered by the grading ordinance.

SR-S4. Development in Mapped Community Separators.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-S4. Development in Mapped Community Separators. ~~Unless there are existing design standards adopted for community separators, New structures development within mapped community separators shall:~~

- A. Site and design structures to take maximum advantage of existing topography and vegetation in order to substantially screen structures from view along scenic corridors.
- B. Minimize cuts and fills on hills and ridges.
- C. Minimize the removal of trees and other mature vegetation.
- D. Install landscaping consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fits with the character of the area in order to screen structures from view where existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from scenic corridors.
- E. Design structures to use building materials and color schemes that blend with the natural landscape.
- F. Cluster structures on each parcel within existing built areas ~~and near existing natural features,~~ to the maximum extent feasible.

~~Locate building sites and roadways to preserve natural features, native vegetation and existing trees.~~

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The impact of the Standard cannot be assessed without the map. Given the effectiveness of current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create these.

SR-S5. Subdivisions in Community Separators.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-S5. Subdivisions in Community Separators. Subdivisions in community separators shall:

- A. Ensure developments are subordinate to the viewscape, from the point of view of public roadways and trails.
- B. Reduce visual impact where consistent with the Land Use Element by clustering.
- C. Preserve natural features and native vegetation by locating building sites and roadways.
- D. Require dedication of permanent open space easement at the time of subdivision to the extent possible allowable by law.
- E. Be accompanied by a visual analysis that demonstrates that the development is not detrimental to or enhances the visual quality of the Community Separators as a whole.
- F. Adequate additional public services and infrastructure are available to serve the development.
- G. The development is compatible with surrounding properties especially those used for agricultural pursuits.
In addition to the mandatory criteria set forth above, special consideration will be given to projects that incorporate one or more of the following:
 - 1) Aggregation of parcels within the Community Separator to achieve a project design that enhances the separators as a whole.
 - 2) Creative financing mechanisms to maintain and preserve open space or parkland that may be dedicated in fee as part of the proposed development.

Project design features that provide for pedestrian or bicycle links between the communities on either side of the Community Separator and to any parkland that may be dedicated in fee as part of the proposed development.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Given the effectiveness of current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create these.

SR-IM1. Mapping of Scenic Areas, Heritage Landscapes and Scenic Roadways.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-IM1. Mapping of Scenic Areas, Heritage Landscapes and Scenic Roadways. Initiate a public process to identify, map, and designate Scenic Areas, Heritage Landscapes and Scenic Roadways, including specific ordinance standards for scenic protections and design review.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The designation of these areas could negatively impact the owners' ability to manage and make necessary improvements on the resource lands.

SR-IM2. Community Separators.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-IM2. Community Separators. Identify, map, and designate an overlay zone, for community separators with specific standard for open space protections and design review.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: Given the effectiveness of current Community Planning Areas we see no need to create these.

SR-IM3. Scenic Road Protection Program.

HCRLG Recommendation: Delete

SR-IM3. Scenic Road Protection Program. Community Development Services and Department of Public Works staff shall develop a program for coordinated protection of mapped Scenic Roads in concert with the involved public and private agencies.

HCRLWG COMMENTS: The impact of the Standard cannot be assessed without the map.